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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 006246

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [IV](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRANCE/COTE D'IVOIRE: NO EASY SOLUTION TO IMPASSE

REF: A. PARIS 6178

[1](#)B. ABIDJAN 1037

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Bruce Turner, 1.4
(b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: MFA Cote d'Ivoire desk officer Charlotte Montel on September 15 expressed frustration with the stalled peace process and said there was no easy solution. Concerned countries had to continue efforts to move the process forward, however, in order to maintain some semblance of movement. Lack of progress towards a political solution has increased pressure on the MFA to solve the problem so that costs associated with Operation Licorne and UNOCI can be reduced and to enable the redeployment of troops serving in Licorne to other places. The toxic waste incident, while a tragedy, has perhaps educated Ivoirians to Gbagbo's callous misrule. France has sent a team to assist with the cleanup effort and has told the Ivoirians that those responsible should be called to account. END COMMENT.

[1](#)2. (C) MFA Cote d'Ivoire desk officer Charlotte Montel on September 15 provided her views of the situation in that country, following our discussion the previous day with her boss, DAS-equivalent Bruno Foucher (ref A). While echoing Foucher's points, Montel also expressed significant frustration with the lack of progress in the peace process. Some of her comments on the stop-start-stop nature of the process were similar to those expressed in ref B. She noted that hope for elections in October had evaporated some time ago, well before the recent official acknowledgment that the original timetable would not hold. Nonetheless, she said that France and other concerned countries had to continue seeking a solution and pressing the Ivoirians in order to maintain and generate momentum, however difficult that might be. The Ivoirians had to be encouraged to take an active and serious role in resolving their differences -- short of a massive effort and increased engagement on the part of international community (which in her view was not likely to develop), the Cote d'Ivoire problem could not be solved without Ivoirians taking the lead.

[1](#)3. (C) France firmly supported the most recent statement of the International Working Group, Montel said, although she appeared less optimistic than Foucher (ref A, para 3) that it would produce results. She stressed the need to give more power to the Prime Minister, as reflected in para 5(e) of the IWG's statement.

4 (C) Montel mentioned that the lack of movement had caused, understandably, fatigue on the part of the international community, which was growing impatient and becoming more sensitive to the costs of its continuing investment, both financial and political. Other elements of the GOF were badgering the MFA to "achieve a political solution," she said, particularly the MOD. The 250 million

euro annual cost of Operation Licorne (now totaling about 1 billion euro after four years) was attracting GOF-wide attention as an obvious source of funds for other purposes. Moreover, Licorne was an obvious resource for those wanting to consider increased French troop deployments in Lebanon and Afghanistan. (NOTE: Separately, MOD contacts have also expressed a desire to downsize Licorne, but no redeployments to Lebanon or Afghanistan are envisioned, at present. END NOTE) Yet, reducing Licorne would send bad signals vis-a-vis France's commitment to Cote d'Ivoire, Montel lamented. Still, the lack of progress in the peace process made it increasingly difficult to defend Licorne (and UNOCI as well), especially after all these years, she commented.

15. (C) France had dispatched a team from the Interior Ministry in response to the toxic waste scandal, to help identify, contain, and clean up contaminated areas. Montel said that Minister-Delegate for Cooperation, Development, and Francophonie Brigitte Girardin, in Cote d'Ivoire for the IWG meeting at the same time the scandal was growing, made clear to the Ivoirians that responsible parties to the tragedy should be identified and held accountable. Montel said that the incident, while a human tragedy, could help Ivoirians better appreciate Gbagbo's callous way of governance and thus weaken him. She criticized Gbagbo as well for his decision not to travel to New York to attend Cote d'Ivoire-related activities, now being considered, on the margins of the UN General Assembly.

16. (C) COMMENT: The French have only lately overcome their reluctance to admit the election calendar for Cote d'Ivoire is unsustainable. The French Presidency had long been pushing the notion of a mere "technical delay," for instance. Montel, who only recently became Cote d'Ivoire desk officer following a tour as C.A.R. desk officer, is unencumbered by

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association with past French policies on Cote d'Ivoire. Her candor is refreshing. She has been a helpful interlocutor and more willing than some of her MFA colleagues to express her own views and not simply recite the party line. END COMMENT.

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